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SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE

NEWS

REGION 4

COMPRISING STATES OF LOUISIANA, ARKANSAS
AND TEXAS, EXCEPT HIGH PLAINS AREA

REGIONAL OFFICE--FORT WORTH, TEXAS

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FARMERS VOTE IN SEVEN LOUISIANA SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

Approximately 99 per cent of the 8,524 landowners who voted in referendums this month in Louisiana cast their ballots in favor of the establishment of seven state soil and water conservation districts embracing nearly 7,000,000 acres of land, members of the state soil conservation committee report.

The overwhelmingly favorable vote paved the way for the creation of the following soil conservation districts, all planned for organization on a watershed basis:

Upper Sabine District: 935,248 acres in Caddo, DeSoto, Sabine and Vernon Parishes.

Dorchat-Bedcau District: 960,768 acres in Bossier, Claiborne, Bienville and Red River Parishes.

Upper Red River District: 803,245 acres in Caddo, DeSoto, Red River, Natchitoches and Sabine Parishes.

Pearl River District: 967,680 acres in Washington, St. Tammany, Tangipahoa and St. Helena Parishes.

D'Arbonne District: 1,178,584 acres in Union, Claiborne, Lincoln, Jackson and Ouachita Parishes.

Saline District: 900,864 acres in Webster, Claiborne, Bienville, Winn, Red River and Natchitoches Parishes.

Feliciana District: 829,572 acres in East and West Feliciana, East Baton Rouge and St. Helena parishes.

Farmers balloted as follows in the seven proposed districts:

	<u>For</u>	<u>Against</u>
D'Arbonne	1,988	27
Saline	1,203	24
Pearl River	2,008	9
Sabine	1,179	34
Upper West Red	627	21
Feliciana	394	15
Dorchester	964	31

The state committee has received 27 petitions signed by 2,000 landowners seeking the creation of soil conservation districts. The state committee has decided tentatively upon the organization of 14 districts covering some 11,000,000 acres of land subject to erosion. There are more than 73,000 farms located in the 14 proposed districts.

Nearly 3,000 persons have attended the 27 preliminary hearings conducted in eight watersheds where farmers have requested the formation of districts. An unofficial vote, taken at each hearing to determine how many of the farmers wanted referendums called, showed that all attending the hearings were 100 per cent in favor of the proposal. Attendance at the hearings ranged from 25 to 700 persons.

The state committee, acting on the reminder of the farmer petitions has scheduled further hearings in proposed districts as follows:

Proposed Lower East Red River District:

January 25 Cifax
 January 25 Winnfield
 January 26 Jones
 January 26 Harrisburg
 January 27 Alexandria

Proposed Grand Coteau District:

January 27 Pine Prairie

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TWO NEW DISTRICTS FORMED IN ARKANSAS

Farmers Moving Forward Rapidly with Erosion Control
Programs in 10 Original Districts

The number of state soil conservation districts in Arkansas has been increased to 12 by the addition of the South Crowley Ridge and the Terre-Ridge Bodcaw districts. The Service is cooperating with 10 of these districts.

The South Crowley Ridge district, covering 397,180 acres along Crowley Ridge in Lee, St. Francis and Cross Counties, was voted in by a large majority, 886 of 892 landowners voting in favor of its establishment. Terre-Ridge Bodcaw district lies in Hempstead, Nevada and LaFayette Counties. South Crowley Ridge District has elected supervisors and the work plan has been prepared. Supervisors have not been elected in the Terre-Ridge Bodcaw district.

As of November 1, 798 farmers who operate 102,323 acres of land located in the 10 state soil conservation districts now in operation in Arkansas had established erosion control programs on their farms or were in the process of installing conservation practices on their land.

An additional 196 farms covering 26,055 acres had been planned for conservation operations but agreements between individual farmers and boards of district supervisors had not yet been entered into. Conservation surveys had been made on 929,004 acres of land in the districts. More than 2,621 farmers had made applications to their respective boards of supervisors for assistance in the establishment of complete conservation farming programs on their land.

A survey made in five of the 10 districts this month showed that farmers are enthusiastically tackling their erosion problems by moving forward as rapidly as possible with the installation of conservation practices.

Farmers who have had one or more practices of a conservation program on their land in years past have evidenced a desire to obtain assistance and make their programs complete. Others who have not followed conservation practices of any kind indicate that they already realize the economic value of the program.

U. J. Glasgow, who has entered into a cooperative agreement with the board of supervisors for Nine Creek District with headquarters at Nashville, reported that the use of contour cultivation and strip cropping on an 11-acre field made it possible for him to produce a half bale of cotton to the acre this year whereas his usual yield is about a third of a bale to the acre. In addition, he raised two tons of sorghum and pea hay on his strips. Mr. Glasgow had no conservation practices on his farm prior to last spring.

This winter he has 20 of his 37 acres of cultivated land protected by oat strips and has in $15\frac{1}{2}$ acres of vetch for a winter cover crop to control erosion and improve his soil. The residue from his summer strips has been left to control erosion during the winter months.

D. C. Wheeler who farms 142 acres near Harrison, and who has entered into a cooperative agreement with the Crooked Creek soil conservation district, reported that a six-acre field on his farm retired from cultivation in 1935 because it could not be kept profitably in clean-tilled crops and which was seeded with sericea lespedeza to control erosion, produced three tons of lespedeza hay to the acre this year. In addition, it yielded a lespedeza seed crop of 100 pounds to the acre. His experience with the use of legumes to control erosion and help rebuild soil on land eroded, or subject to erosion, has caused Mr. Wheeler to seek the assistance of his district supervisors in installing a complete and coordinated erosion control program on his entire farm.

J. M. Danley of Scottsville, near Russellville, in the Illinois Bayou soil conservation district, has entered into a cooperative agreement with his board of supervisors and is establishing a complete conservation farming program on his 170-acre farm.

A six-acre field on the Danley farm was retired from cultivation five years ago because erosion had claimed much of the top-soil. A Bermuda-Lespadeza meadow was established to control erosion and yield forage for livestock. Since that time, the meadow has furnished grazing for livestock and an average annual hay crop of 300 bales to the acre.

"The six-acre field which is paying an excellent profit as a meadow was so badly eroded that cultivation was a losing business. During the two years prior to its retirement it produced only a fourth of a bale of cotton to the acre and eventually would have been abandoned. Now erosion is controlled and the hay produced far outweighs in value the cotton formerly produced on this field," Mr. Danley said. Now Mr. Danley wants a complete conservation program on his entire farm

His experience with vetch as an erosion control and soil-building crop has convinced L. H. McBryde, of Palmyra, Ark., in Lincoln County, of the necessity for conservation. Mr. McBryde has entered into cooperative agreement with the Lower East Saline soil conservation district with headquarters at Monticello and is now establishing a complete conservation farming program on his 115-acre farm.

Mr. McBryde reported that he planted about four acres to cotton on one of his cultivated fields in 1937. Commercial fertilizer was used. The cotton yield was a half-bale to the acre. In the fall of 1937, three and a half acres of this cotton field was seeded with vetch. The vetch was turned under in the spring and the entire field planted to corn. The corn yield on the three and one-half acres was 24 bushels to the acre while the corn produced on the half-acre not receiving the benefit of vetch was only 12 bushels to the acre.

The continuous use, during the last 44 years, of erosion control and soil-building crops has made it possible for him to increase and to maintain yields on his 160-acre farm located 10 miles southeast of Conway, J. L. George reports.

"My average cotton yield for many years has been three-fourths of a bale although fresh land normally produces only a half-bale to the acre on an average," Mr. George said. He has produced as high as two bales to the acre on his bottom land after using soil-building crops. Mr. George has been using lespediza for the past 20 years. He sows it with a nurse crop of oats, leaves it for hay and pasture for a few years and then returns it to cultivation. He plants peas between his corn rows and then turns under the stalks and pea vines to improve the soil. Constant attention to controlling erosion and improving soil has made it possible for him to produce in some years as many as 81 bushels of corn to the acre on land which would produce only 25 or 30 bushels before soil-improving crops were grown. His cotton averaged nearly a bale to the acre this year and corn produced 40 bushels to the acre.

Although Mr. George has maintained his yields for a number of years, he feels that he will profit by entering into an agreement with the supervisors of the Central Valley soil conservation district so that he can follow a more complete program of contour cultivation, strip cropping and terracing.

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STRESS IMPORTANCE OF EARLY PLANTING OF WINTER LEGUMES

The importance of early planting of winter legumes to supply nitrogen for the succeeding crop is emphasized in a discussion by A. J. Pieters and Roland McKee of the U. S. Department of Agriculture which appears in the Department Yearbook for 1938, "SOILS AND MEN."

The amount of nitrogen added to the soil when legumes are turned under depends on the kind of legume, the condition of the stand, and the state of growth, they point out.

The amount of nitrogen in a legume when turned under represents the nitrogen it has taken from both the soil and the air, but the amount taken from the air is all that is really added to the soil. The relative amounts derived from each of these sources is difficult to determine and it can only be stated that as a broad average about two-thirds of the nitrogen in a legume is believed to have been taken from the air and one-third from the soil.

An extra two or three weeks growth in the spring may double the nitrogen value of a winter cover crop. A winter cover crop of hairy vetch in Alabama had a nitrogen content of 137 pounds to the acre on April 19, and a little more than 200 pounds on May 9. In Delaware, crimson clover crops varied from 140 pounds to 190 pounds of nitrogen to the acre. In North Carolina, sweet

clover supplied 124 pounds of nitrogen in early April and 160 in late May.

These results are roughly parallel, and the authors translate them into practical fertilizer terms. The amounts of nitrogen added in these cases would have been equal, they say, to the application of 600 to 800 pounds of nitrate of soda to the acre..

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UNDER SECRETARY VISITS REGION 4

The most significant development along the agricultural front today is the general sentiment in favor of soil conservation, M. L. Wilson, Under Secretary of Agriculture said this month. Mr. Wilson, on a tour through the Southwest, stopped at Fort Worth for a conference with Louis P. Merrill, regional conservator for the Service, inspected the Adams Creek watershed project of the Service in the vicinity of Vernon and made talks to groups of farmers at Plainview, Texas and Altus, Oklahoma.

"The need for control of erosion and preservation of the land has found ready recognition among city dwellers as well as farmers," Mr. Wilson said. "Establishment of the Soil Conservation Service followed the general and widespread demand for an agency to help in conserving the soil and one of its greatest problems has been an attempt to keep up with the increasing demands for assistance."

He said farmers throughout the U. S. have shown a more than gratifying response in taking advantage of laws passed in 27 states enabling them to set up their own soil conservation districts and to solve their erosion problems by cooperative action.

"These soil conservation districts for which the farmers themselves make the rules and regulations are real units of agricultural democracy," Mr. Wilson stated.

En route to Altus, Okla., Mr. Wilson stopped in the Adams Creek area long enough to look over the farms of three cooperators, H. H. Nixon, president of the Adams Creek Soil and Water Conservation Association; E. B. Gillis and Orva Cook.

"The work of such voluntary farmer organizations as the soil and water conservation associations in putting across an improved program of agriculture in the communities they represent reflects a high type of farmer cooperation," he said.

"I am very enthusiastic about the farmer cooperation that has made possible the improvement of so many farms now operated in accordance with sound land use principles. I think that the cooperative efforts of federal and state agencies with farmers in effecting the conservation of our soil and other natural resources is commendable. It is the direction in which we should go.

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RECORD KEEPING FOR CONSERVATION FARMERS

By Delbert H. Taylor,
Associate Soil Conservationist

How many farmers know the cost of producing a pound of cotton, a bushel of corn, a pound of pork, or a gallon of milk on their farms? It is doubtful that a farmer can tell whether a certain enterprise or practice is paying, or losing, him money if he does not keep some kind of records on his farming operation.

If a farmer expects to know five years from now what phases of his farming program proved profitable in the past, he must start to keep records now. If he finds certain practices of benefit to his land during the next decade, if he makes greater profits by following a program of soil and water conservation, or if his plans slip somewhere and he loses money, he will want to know in 1944 what was good and what was bad for his and his family's welfare. Simple, complete farm records are the answer to hundreds of puzzling questions which probably will present themselves during the years ahead.

No merchant having an investment equal to that which most farmers have in their individual farms would try to operate his business for even thirty days without complete records of all transactions. He has found that it does not pay to try to depend upon his memory. He would reject as unsound and unsafe any suggestion that he operate year after year without a set of books to tell him which operations are losing him money, and which are showing a profit.

Farmers are finding that the same kind of information so valuable to the merchant is of increasing importance to them. Farming is constantly becoming more complex and older methods must give way to new to meet changing conditions. A simple set of farm accounts that takes only a few minutes' time each day will show the farmer which of these new, as well as the old, methods are paying dividends and which should be either changed or eliminated in his farm set-up.

Farm records of successful farms show that a well-diversified farm is much more profitable in the long run than one on which the operator is continually gambling as to which commodity will bring a good price next year. Diversification requires the keeping of careful records if unprofitable enterprises are to be weeded out. Start your records now!

THE NORTHEAST NORTHEAST OF ONE

By H. C. Mitchell,
Head, Woodland Management Section

"The Northeast Northeast of One", T13S:R8W, may be merely a geographical location in southeastern Arkansas to most folk, but the words mean "successful woodland management" to an ever-widening circle of woodland owners.

The reason -

This forty-acre tract had a stand of 187,000 board foot of merchantable timber in 1928, according to expert timber estimates. The cut since that time, under careful regulation, has been

1930	. . . . .	98,274	bd. ft.
1932	. . . . .	39,618	bd. ft.
1936	. . . . .	46,806	bd. ft.
1938	. . . . .	9,515	bd. ft.

Total cut 194,213 bd. ft.

Merchantable timber now standing totals 214,000 board feet.

Analyzing these figures we find that, on an acre basis, the growth since 1928 (10 growing seasons) has averaged 552 bd. ft. per year, of which the owner has harvested an average of 485 bd. ft. per year, leaving 67 bd. ft. to accumulate and add to his growing stock so that his growth, and cut, may be still greater during the next 10 years.

As a result of successful fire protection, combined with good cutting practice, a layer of leaf litter has developed, there is some humus near the soil surface, soil porosity is much improved allowing a high percentage of rainfall to be absorbed, all of which has effectively controlled erosion. Growing conditions are improving each year as a result of this soil improvement, and reproduction of pine is coming in abundantly in most places where needed. Open range grazing, listed by the owner as his second highest hazard, is causing some damage, but this matter is beyond his control at present.

Under such management this "forty" will contribute the maximum of which vegetation is capable toward flood control for all time to come; soil erosion is permanently controlled; and it will continue without end to yield a highly satisfactory and regular return to the owner. This is good woodland management.

The "Northeast Northeast of One" is the property of and is personally managed by Mr. L. K. Pomeroy of Monticello, Arkansas.

What such a woodland might mean as an adjunct to a general farming operation depends upon a variety of considerations aside from yield, and may be figured separately by each interested reader.

EROSION CONTROL AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

By Homer G. Towns,
Regional Biologist

As a result of the improvement of habitats for wildlife through the use of vegetative land cover of all kinds to control erosion, coupled with educational programs by various organizations, farmers, throughout Region 4, are beginning to show an active interest in wildlife conservation.

It has been shown that landowners in general are willing to devote badly crooked areas, field borders, idle corners and fence rows to vegetation which will control erosion and at the same time provide food and cover for wildlife. They will, and are, protecting woodlands, meadows, pastures and crop residues from fire and overgrazing. They are leaving small grain, legumes and other crops in the fields for wildlife food and are constructing and fencing off farm ponds to provide improved habitats for wildlife.

Farmers who have provided food and cover for wildlife have evidenced a desire to go even a step further in the conservation of wildlife.

In order that adequate breeding stock of the various species of wildlife will be preserved, farmers and sportsmen are anxious to develop some plan which will insure a systematic harvest of wildlife crops. Several plans have been evolved by groups actively interested in preserving breeding stock.

The plan which seems to offer the best possibilities for providing adequate protection for the wildlife and at the same time the one which will prove most satisfactory to farmers and sportsmen is through the organization of wildlife protective associations.

It is evident that the posting of farms against hunting will not satisfactorily protect wildlife. Public sentiment must favor controlled hunting. Associations provide the medium by which farmers and sportsmen in entire communities may reach mutual understandings regarding the formulation of control measures and the application of such control systems.

Other advantages to be gained through the organization of game protective associations are:

- 1). Posting signs can be placed uniformly on farms throughout a large locality by using the name of the local organization either alone or in combination with a state or federal agency. This seems to be the most effective way of proving to the public that widespread efforts are being made to conserve wildlife.

- 2). Posting signs can be furnished through an association at a very nominal cost.
- 3). Local organizations, such as Boy Scouts, sportsmen's groups, 4-H clubs, FFA chapters, can assist very materially in conservation work by working through an association.

Since the Soil Conservation Service is not a control agency, the organization of protective associations sponsored by local citizens and organizations makes it possible for Service technicians to cooperate in this type of activity without creating an impression in the minds of local citizens that we are responsible for control measures.

Wildlife protective associations which are proving highly successful have been organized at Dublin, Texas; Ruston, Louisiana; and Arcadia, Louisiana.

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